DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 428 896 PS 027 481

TITLE	Promoting Primary Education for Girls in Malawi. CDIE Impact Evaluation.
INSTITUTION	Development Experience Clearinghouse, Arlington, VA.
SPONS AGENCY	Agency for International Development (IDCA), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	PN-ACA-916
PUB DATE	1999-03-00
NOTE	21p.
CONTRACT	AEP-C-00-97-00002-00
AVAILABLE FROM	USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse, 1611 North Kent Street, Arlington, VA 22209; Tel: 703-251-4006; Fax: 702-351-4039; e-mail: docorder@dec.cdie.org; Web site: www.usaid.gov
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Access to Education; Educational Policy; Elementary Education; *Females; Foreign Countries; Government School Relationship; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS	*Malawi

ABSTRACT

The USAID/Malawi (Africa) Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) project emphasized girls' participation in schooling within a broader systemic effort to address efficiency and school quality in the Malawian primary education system. Important features of GABLE were a fee-waiver program for non-repeating primary girls to attract them to and keep them in school and a Social Mobilization Campaign to encourage parents and community leaders to send girls to school. In autumn 1997, a 10-person team for USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation examined the agency's initiatives in girls' education in Malawi. Team members consulted more than 130 documents, conducted more than 200 interviews, and made site visits to a number of communities. In evaluating the GABLE project, the team found the following achievements: (1) fee waivers have contributed to increased girls' primary enrollments and persistence; (2) GABLE budget support and conditionalities, along with other donor contributions, have fueled increased funding for education; and (3) girls' education is high on the national agenda. Shortcomings were: (1) quality improvements lag quantity increases; (2) fee waivers and scholarships increase access but may threaten quality and sustainability; (3) policy dialog has been difficult; (4) in quality of schooling, demand has outpaced supply; (5) synergistic effects and efficiencies were missed; and (6) sustainability of program efforts was not maximized. (EV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 428 896

CDIE

Impact Evaluation

United States Agency for International Development

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PROMOTING PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR GIRLS IN MALAWI

USAID initiatives have helped increase girls' access to education in this southeast African country. But this success, combined with implications of a national universal education policy, is burdening an already overloaded system.

SUMMARY

The USAID/Malawi Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) project emphasized girls' participation in schooling within a broader systemic effort to address efficiency and school quality in the Malawian primary education system. In 1991 USAID and the government of Malawi entered into an agreement for a five-year, $20 million program to increase girls' attainment (defined as access, persistence, and completion) in primary education toward the ultimate goal of reducing fertility. The original design provided $14 million in nonproject assistance—funds designed to bring about institutional and policy reform. The money came in the form of three cash-grant disbursements. In addition $6 million in project assistance was provided for specific activities and technical assistance. Important features of GABLE I were a fee-waiver program for nonrepeating primary girls to attract them to and keep them in school and a Social Mobilization Campaign to encourage parents and community leaders to send girls to school.

GABLE II, approved in 1994, extended the project two years to 1998 and provided an additional $25.5 million. It consisted of an additional $4.5 million in project funds and an additional

Team leader: Marcia Bernbaum

Team members: Kristi Fair, Shirley Miske, Talaat Moreau, Duncan Nyirenda, Johnson Sikes, Joy Wolf, Richard B. Harber Jr., Ash Hartwell, and Beverly Schwartz

CONTENTS

Introduction 3
Methodology 3
Country Context 3
History and Design 5
GABLE Initiatives 7
Successes and Challenges 13
Conclusions 17
Lessons Learned 18

PS 027481

PN–ACA–916

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

March 1999

$21 million in nonproject assistance, bringing the total to $45.5 million. GABLE II was designed to increase the long-term financial base for education; improve the quality, availability, and effectiveness of primary education; and improve the relevance of primary education for girls.

By the time GABLE II was negotiated, the Malawian government had extended the primary fee waiver to all students, girls and boys alike. In a further effort to encourage girls to complete primary school, GABLE II instituted a secondary scholarship program for girls who did not repeat in primary school as an incentive to reduce repetition at the primary level. The Social Mobilization Campaign was continued from GABLE I.

In autumn 1997 a 10-person team from USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation examined the Agency's initiatives in girls' education in Malawi. Team members consulted more than 130 documents, conducted more than 200 interviews, and made site visits to a number of communities. In evaluating the GABLE project, the team found the following achievements:

Fee waivers under GABLE I have contributed to increased girls' primary enrollments and persistence. Between 1990–91, when GABLE began, and 1995–96, girls' enrollments at the primary level almost doubled (from 772,000 in 1990–91 to 1,528,000 in 1995–96). Girls as an overall percentage of enrollments rose from 45 percent to 47 percent. Girls' enrollments were 36 percent of grade 8 enrollments in 1990–91, and 39 percent in 1995–96. That suggests improved persistence. Reducing schooling costs for girls (by waiving fees and eliminating uniforms), as well as promoting social marketing and community mobilization, appears to have contributed to the sharp increase.

GABLE budget support and conditionalities, along with other donor contributions, have fueled increased funding for education. The government has increased the percent of budget directed to education from 10 percent in 1991–92 to 23 percent in 1997–98.

Girls' education is high on the national agenda. Everyone in Malawi—from government officials to parents and children—seems to have heard of GABLE and to know that it promotes girls' education. Attitudes about girls' education are generally positive. The Social Mobilization Campaign has with considerable effect promoted (among chiefs, initiation counselors, teachers, parents, and students) attitudinal and behavioral change about the importance of sending girls to school. It has fostered development of a cadre of community researchers and the next generation of change agents who are committed to girls' education. It has also introduced diverse female role models for primary girls.

But the team did find some shortcomings:

Quality improvements lag quantity increases. Over the course of the 1993–94 and 1994–95 school years, when school fees were eliminated for primary students, primary enrollments skyrocketed from 1.8 million to 3.2 million students. The sharp rise attenuated the quality and efficiency of basic education. The flood of students overwhelmed facilities and necessitated recruitment and posting of inexperienced teachers with minimal training. The supply of instructional materials for students and teachers became inconsistent.

Fee waivers and scholarships increase access but may threaten quality and sustainability. The cost of quality universal primary education is beyond the means of the Malawian government. Approximately 40 percent of costs are donor supported. Secondary scholarships may be creating pressures for universal free access at the secondary level. Rapid enrollment increases have overstressed the capacity of the education sector to provide adequate services.

Policy dialog has been difficult. Malawi became a democracy in 1994, and the transition suddenly made universal education more critical than ever for the government. A political rush to implement "education for all" eliminated the time needed to strengthen and prepare the education sector for expansion. USAID did not respond as flexibly as it might have to changing realities; it imposed some conditionalities that were not supported by the government, resulting in a strategy, on some issues, of enforcement rather than dialog.

In quality of schooling, demand has outpaced supply. Provision of quality school services has failed to keep pace with community demand stimulated in part by intiatives of the Social Mobilization Campaign. This incongruity could threaten the sustainability of girls' increased access to schooling and of community participation.

Synergistic effects and efficiencies were missed. Poor integration among program initiatives, between program and policy initiatives, and of USAID-supported initiatives with other Ministry of Education and donor activities resulted in missed opportunities.

Sustainability of program efforts was not maximized. Weak integration, communication, monitoring and evaluation, and little emphasis on strengthening local leadership and institutions may have reduced the likelihood of local ownership and sustained outcomes, especially for the Social Mobilization Campaign.

INTRODUCTION

In May 1997, USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation commissioned a series of five case studies (Guatemala, Guinea, Malawi, Nepal, and Pakistan) to look at the Agency's experience worldwide in addressing the needs of girls through basic education programs. This case study examines an ongoing program in Malawi, the Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) project. It was initiated in 1991 at a level of $20 million and was subsequently modified in 1994 to add another $25.5 million.* The purpose of GABLE is to increase girls' attainment in basic education. Its overall goal is to reduce fertility in Malawi.

METHODOLOGY

This country case study was conducted in coordination with a field evaluation of the GABLE II program in the fall of 1997. The team consulted more than 130 documents, interviewed more than 200 people from within and without the education system, and made site visits to communities to observe and interview teachers, parents, and students. The team triangulated findings, using multiple qualitative techniques and analyzing quantitative data to answer evaluation questions about the impact of GABLE on girls' education.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Malawi is a landlocked country with a population of nearly 11 million, of whom 87 percent live in rural areas. It is situated in southeastern Africa, bordered to the north by Tanzania, to the west by Zambia, and to the east and south by Mozambique. One of the poorest countries in the world, Malawi has a per capita gross national product of $170, an average life expectancy at birth of 43 years for men and 44 years for women, an infant mortality rate of 133 per 1,000 live births, an under-5 mortality rate of 243

*The team that carried out this case study also prepared, at the request of the USAID Mission in Malawi, an in-depth evaluation of the GABLE II program. That evaluation, while touching on several of the themes in this case study, goes beyond the scope of the case study to address the overall GABLE program. Copies of this evaluation can be obtained from USAID/Malawi.

per 1,000 live births, and an average of 6.7 live births per woman among women of reproductive age. Malawi's rate of HIV infection of 12–14 percent (30 percent in urban areas) is among the highest in the world.

Malawi's gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate varies widely from year to year depending on crop conditions and world prices for its major exports (tobacco and tea). For the next five years it is expected to average 3.0 percent per year—less than the projected population growth rate of 3.2 percent. Agriculture, the backbone of the economy, employs 85 percent of the economically active population. It accounts for 38 percent of GDP and involves 91 percent of the labor force (of which 80 percent are smallholders).

The GABLE program was designed during the final years of the regime of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who became president for life when the country achieved independence in 1963. (It had been a British protectorate for 74 years.) Under Banda, in the early stages of the implementation of the GABLE program, a measure of fiscal discipline and tight control over operations existed at all ministries. Negotiating the details of the GABLE I design with personnel in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance proceeded with confidence that government control ensured adherence to agreements.

In 1994, when GABLE was well into its third year of implementation, this atmosphere began to change. The country was preparing for democratic elections. Inflation soared and fiscal discipline started to deteriorate. At the same time, however, exuberance and hope permeated the atmosphere. The arrival of elections and the "second independence" brought confidence in the right to popular free speech and self-determination as well as confusion about authority and the responsibilities that accompany the rights of participatory democracy.

When the Agency began its preparatory work for the GABLE program in 1990, USAID staff and technical advisers encountered an education system highly influenced by British tradition. Students entered primary school in standard (grade) 1 and continued through standard 8, where to graduate from primary school and be eligible to qualify for secondary school they took a standardized test called the Primary School Leaving Exam. Only those who received high grades on the exam qualified for secondary school.

During the first two decades of the Banda regime, enrollments at all levels of the education system were deliberately kept low. Education was highly valued by students and parents. Those fortunate enough to be able to advance through the system were seen as having an opportunity to break out of the vicious circle of poverty and "make it" in society. Primary enrollments totaled 1.4 million, or 60 percent of the school-age population. Secondary enrollments were 4 percent of the secondary-school-age population, among the lowest in the world. A quality education was available, but only to a small elite. Only 1 percent of the eligible population made it to the university.

Of particular concern when GABLE was designed in 1990–91 were the low levels of funding for education and the disparities in financing at the different educational levels. Education received a relatively small share of government funding (9 percent in 1983). In 1990–91, when GABLE was designed, 2 percent of GDP and 10 percent of government expenditures were being spent on education as a whole. Of the latter, 43 percent was spent on primary education. Whereas approximately 37 kwacha ($13) per year was being spent on each primary student,* 12 times that (441 kwacha, or $157 per year) was spent on

*This figure is among the lowest in the world and below recognized levels for an adequate education.

Household Views on Benefits And Costs of Schooling

Results of a survey of 20 families, 10 each in rural Blantyre and urban Blantyre, a city in the southern highlands, give a glimpse of what motivates parents to send their children to school. Families shared these thoughts:

Value of schooling. Schooling is highly valued because it is perceived to increase the chances of finding employment. Most interviewees said that it is equally important for boys and girls to be educated, preferably through high school or university. Respondents in both urban and rural communities consider education to be "crucial" and "important for everyone on earth."

Schooling costs. Both primary and secondary schooling are costly to households. Some respondents initially said that primary schooling was free, because they no longer paid school tuition fees. But after further discussion, it became clear that primary schooling has other substantial costs, including uniforms and materials. In the rural area visited for this survey, parents spend an average of 79 kwacha per year ($4.53) to send their children to primary school. In the urban areas visited, households reported spending, on average, 149 kwacha per year ($8.54) to send their children to primary school.

the average secondary student, and nearly 200 times as much (7,318 kwacha, or $2,613) each year was being spent on elite university students. The disparity ranks as one of the largest regionally between primary and university students.

In 1994 newly elected president Bakili Muluzi in his inaugural speech announced that as part of his commitment to democracy, primary education would henceforth be free and compulsory. The announcement was in keeping with an agreement reached in 1990 at the World Education for All Conference (held in Jomtien, Thailand) that all countries would strive to achieve universal primary education by the year 2000. From May 1994 through September 1994, primary enrollments swelled from 1.8 million to 3.2 million. Twenty-two thousand primary teachers—18,000 without qualifications—were hired, nearly doubling the primary teaching force. Over the next few months most unqualified teachers received a crash two-week orientation to their new profession.

Faced with increased enrollments, the Ministry of Education undertook an aggressive campaign to attract donor funding to assist with teacher training, classroom construction, textbooks and learning materials, and other support services. As the former minister of education said when interviewed for the GABLE evaluation, "We went to the donors and said, 'We want free primary education. We are on this train. We are going with or without you. Are you with us or not?'" The donor community responded with more than $130 million for primary education.

Exuberant over the advent of democracy, the populace enthusiastically endorsed free primary education as a symbol of equity for Malawi's underserved population. The new Malawian government gained a great deal of political capital. Throughout his presidency, the incumbent has kept education high on the agenda as a sign that his party is fulfilling one of its most important promises to the Malawian people.

HISTORY AND DESIGN OF GABLE I AND GABLE II

The GABLE Program had its origins in the late 1980s, when Congress was pressuring the Agency to step up its activities in basic education in Africa. A team from the Africa Bureau was to come up with a strategy for addressing basic education needs. It assessed the status of the education system in Malawi and recommended that the Mission consider a program that would indeed integrate girls but also have a broader purpose. That is, the program should address the limitations of the Malawian pri-

mary education system as a whole. The team urged that quality and efficiency not be sacrificed in an attempt to increase access.

During the following year, USAID/Malawi, with extensive outside assistance, designed a primary education program that addressed girls while dealing with broader systemic issues. The Mission joined forces with a group of prominent Malawian women who shared concerns about girls' education. USAID sponsored a conference in 1990 in which a number of Malawian women outlined what they believed were the main impediments. Their analysis and resultant recommendations served as an important base for what was to become the design of the initial GABLE program.

After months of negotiation with Ministry of Education officials plus consultations with teachers and other officials in the education system, in September 1991 USAID and the Malawian government entered into an agreement for a five-year, $20 million program, GABLE I. It sought overall to increase girls' attainment (defined as access, persistence, and completion) in primary education. The original design provided $14 million in budget support in the form of three cash-grant disbursements (of $4 million, $5 million, and $5 million over three years). It also provided $6 million in project assistance for activities and technical assistance over the life of GABLE.

The government, civic groups, and USAID cooperated in the design of the GABLE I program and policy reforms. Girls' interventions were built on the recommendations of prominent Malawian women who formed the National Commission on Women and who were actively involved in the political scene. GABLE I also incorporated the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Culture into the design of the Social Mobilization Campaign.

When GABLE II was designed during the summer of 1994, high-level officials in the Ministry of Education were carrying out the free primary education policy announced by President Muluzi. USAID officials were stretched thin. They were simultaneously designing several major program amendments, of which GABLE II was one. The GABLE II design did not address the dramatic increase in primary school enrollments brought about by the policy of free primary education. USAID's design emphasized several general policies, such as reducing repetition rates. Minimum and maximum age of entry into primary school were conditions to be met for continued support. These conditions were incongruent with the popular vision of free primary education in a country celebrating democracy. They were resisted at all levels of the system.

GABLE II, approved in September 1994, provided an additional $25.5 million to the already obligated $20 million—an additional $4.5 million in project funds and $21 million in nonproject assistance. That brought the total to $45.5 million. In addition, GABLE was extended by two years, to 30 September 1998.

Girls were the ultimate target audience of GABLE, but USAID appreciated that if the education system was to benefit girls, the education system *as a whole* needed to be strengthened, affecting both boys and girls. GABLE II was designed as a broad education sectoral reform program with three supporting objectives:

Increasing the long-term financial base for education through the use of nonproject assistance and, for the release of such assistance, a series of conditionalities aimed at 1) continuing to increase the proportion of the government revenue budget going to the education sector, 2) continuing to increase the proportion of the education budget going to the primary-education subsector budget, 3) increasing the proportion of the primary-education budget for learning

materials, and 4) exploring reallocations within the overall education budget to make more funds available for primary education.

Improving the quality, availability, and efficiency of primary education by 1) increasing the number of schools through the establishment of community-based primary schools (with an emphasis on improved attainment for girls), 2) recruiting and training more teachers, 3) putting more learning materials into the hands of pupils, 4) encouraging the enactment of policy changes* to increase school efficiency, and 5) improving the statistical and planning capacity of the Ministry of Education.

Improving the relevance of primary education for girls by 1) strengthening a body called the Gender Appropriate Curriculum unit, established with USAID assistance under GABLE I; 2) establishing a scholarship fund for eligible secondary-school girls; and 3) improving the achievement of girls on the Primary School Leaving Exam through gender streaming for math classes.

GABLE INITIATIVES DESIGNED TO AFFECT GIRLS

The Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education project took three strategic action approaches to achieving its objectives and improving girls' access and persistence:

- Influencing the direction of policy reforms
- Undertaking pilot studies to test possible future policies
- Creating structures to support reform

*Policy conditions included measures to reduce repetition, restrict late entry into primary school, enact double-shifting in urban schools, reallocate teachers and learning materials to lower standards where repetition is highest, and explore possibilities for age streaming.

Policy Reforms

Policy reforms fell into two categories: those that reduced the cost of educating girls and those that helped girls complete schooling before they take on adult roles.

Reducing the Cost of Educating Girls

FEE WAIVERS FOR PRIMARY-SCHOOL GIRLS. Studies have revealed that lack of money for school fees was a major reason for girls dropping out of school. In 1990, annual school fees amounted to 3.5 kwacha per child (about $1.30)—for subsistence farmers, a large amount of cash. One component of GABLE I addressed this problem by providing nonproject assistance money to the government for fee waivers for all nonrepeating girls in standards 2 through 8. The intention was to support a cadre of girls through completion of their primary schooling. That would demonstrate girls' abilities, showing the impact of their education. It would also raise the system's and communities' expectations for girls.

In general, the government carried out with dedication fee waivers for nonrepeating primary-school girls. Almost everyone had daughters, so almost everyone was interested in the policy and benefited from it. This did not mean, however, that the policy was not controversial. Many communities challenged the idea of giving fee waivers only to girls and not boys, but that controversy helped to spread awareness of the issues behind supporting girls' education. As the public's expectation grew that education was a benefit of a democratic government, fee waivers were extended to boys.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SECONDARY-SCHOOL GIRLS. Fees for girls attending primary school were no longer a constraint after the new government waived fees for all primary school students. To help motivate girls to complete primary school and continue on to secondary school, USAID sponsored the Secondary School Girls'

Scholarship Program as part of GABLE II. A minimum of $2 million a year in GABLE II nonproject assistance funds (equivalent to 30 percent of funds set aside for primary girls' fee waivers under GABLE I) was earmarked for a girls' secondary scholarship program.

During the 1995–96 school year some 6,000 girls took advantage of scholarships, or 17 percent of the estimated 35,000 girls attending secondary schools. To serve the broadest number of girls with the minimum amount of administration and monitoring effort, the Ministry of Education decided to extend the scholarships to all nonrepeating girls in Distance Education Centers* and government secondary schools. During the 1996–97 school year, 42,900 girls benefited from the scholarships.

ELIMINATING THE REQUIREMENT FOR SCHOOL UNIFORMS. When GABLE I began, the cost of school uniforms could be as high as 7 kwacha ($2.60), more than the amount of school fees. Girls' uniforms cost more than boys', and families were reluctant to pay for them. In 1992 the Ministry of Education issued a policy stating that uniforms were not necessary for students to attend school. Still, many head teachers continued to turn away students without uniforms. GABLE II once again took up the issue. In 1995, under pressure from GABLE conditionality, the ministry restated its policy on school uniforms: a pupil should not be forced to wear any uniform but should be advised to put on neat, simple clothing.

Radio announcements spread news of the policy reform, making communities aware and expanding the coverage beyond the limited audience of the school circular. Parents generally liked the new policy; they appreciated not having to spend money on uniforms.

*Distance Education Centers are high schools where learning by correspondence is used. They are supported partly by the government, partly by communities.

Helping Girls Complete More Schooling

ELIMINATING PERMANENT EXPULSION OF PREGNANT GIRLS. Before GABLE I, it was common practice in schools throughout Malawi to permanently expel pregnant girls. Several prominent Malawian organizations criticized this policy as discriminatory and inappropriately punitive. GABLE supported efforts to lobby for reform of this policy.

A new policy dismissed for one year boys who made girls pregnant. The same policy allowed the girls to return to school after the birth of a child. Community members were generally delighted, as almost everyone had female relatives whose educational careers had been blocked by pregnancy. But some teachers, head teachers, and district education officials opposed the policy. They felt it would encourage sexual activity among girls and that returning girls would be poor role models and would no longer be able to concentrate on schoolwork. Teachers particularly opposed suspending boys who had impregnated girls. In many cases, they have allowed those boys to remain in school. Over time, though, with pressure to implement the policy coming from both the community and the ministry, teachers and local officials began to accept and support the new policy.

REPETITION. In Malawi, although girls' dropout rates and poor achievement are related to conditions affecting the entire education system, these conditions do have particular significance for girls. High repetition rates affect girls more adversely than they do boys. Because girls' labor is needed in the household, parents are more sensitive to "lost" time for ineffective schooling for girls; by tradition, when a girl repeats, parents are more likely to assume that compared with her brother, she is not performing well, not capable of performing well, and will never complete school. Thus she is more likely to be withdrawn than her brother. The premise was that if repetition were

A Primary School Snapshot

At each of four rural schools and two urban schools in the capital (Lilongwe), a GABLE evaluation team collected information on the physical layout of the school and presence of educational materials. Team members observed teachers and students during class periods. They interviewed a sample of teachers, students, parents, and community members on a variety of topics related to schooling in the community; and they administered a literacy and numeracy assessment to a sample of standard 2 students. Among the findings:

Facilities and equipment. Just over half of the teachers were qualified; two thirds of these were men. Nineteen of the 30 classrooms were cement block and 8 were bamboo; 3 classes met under trees. In one school, standard 8 children had desks; otherwise, all children sat on the floor. Two schools had no water; two had wells, one with water and one without. All schools had latrines. Textbooks were in fairly good supply for children in standards 1–6. Most children had exercise books purchased by their parents. The Ministry of Education was supposed to provide them free of charge, but in most instances the books arrived late in the year, so parents had no choice but to purchase them.

Classes in session. In most schools, boys sat separately from girls. Teachers tended to call on boys more than girls. With one exception, teachers tended to speak in negative tones to all children. In only one school were children seen to be interacting with one another in small groups. In the rest of the schools, students listened while the teacher lectured.

Test performance. In the literacy and numeracy assessment, 8 out of 25 girls and 5 out of 13 boys aged 7 through 14 were able to name at least three letters from the Chichewa alphabet. (Chichewa is one of two official languages; English is the other.) Only 4 girls and 2 boys out of 38 pupils tested were able to recognize or read seven out of eight Chichewa words and sentences. In math, all 25 girls and 11 of 13 boys correctly completed at least two out of three addition problems of two single-digit numerals.

reduced, then girls would move through the system more rapidly. They would have completed more of their education by the point when marriage, pregnancy, or other adult female activities would limit the likelihood that these girls would continue their education.

GABLE I and II conditionality, building on prior World Bank conditionalities, specified that policy directives be issued to reduce repetition. In response to USAID and World Bank conditionalities, from 1993 through 1995 the Ministry of Education issued many policy directives instructing schools to reduce their high rates of repetition. The directives took no account of whether the schools could address quality and other issues that underlay high levels of repetition. However, many schools and communities reported they had never heard of the policies. Moreover, teachers often found the policies difficult to understand. They did not comprehend the goals, and they found the policies to conflict with their beliefs that promotions should be based on exam scores or the teacher's sense of pupil competence. Attempts to establish a registration system that would allow students to be tracked and to monitor promotions and repetitions have not succeeded, so the implementation and effects of the repetition reduction policy cannot be accurately evaluated.

AGE AT SCHOOL ENTRY. The age range of pupils in many Malawian schools was large, especially because there was a major influx of overage students right after the government declared free primary education. A 1997 study indicates that the age range in each standard is relatively small in the Northern Region, but in some Central and Southern Region schools 17-year-old children are found along with 6-year-olds in standards 1 and 2. To encourage girls to

complete more of their education by an earlier age and to ease some of the difficulties created for girls by older boys in their classes, USAID supported a limit on the maximum age for entry into primary school. In 1994, as a condition for a GABLE II fifth disbursement, the government formulated a maximum-age policy. But the Ministry of Education was reluctant to issue this policy. In the context of the still relatively new "free education" policy, it was difficult to suggest to Malawians that there were limits on who could go to school, especially since alternative sources for education are not provided for overage pupils or preschool programs for underage siblings. The government's resistance was not unfounded; in other countries, age limits have been *eliminated* to encourage girls' education, because research has shown age limits to be barriers to girls' enrollment.

The ministry issued a minimum-age policy circular in response to GABLE II conditionality in 1996. Little has been done, though, to implement this policy. Visits to a small number of schools in the fall of 1997 found no schools in which age requirements were checked for entering children. It is possible that the minimum-age policy could be an obstacle for girls, because many girls bring to school younger siblings for whom they are responsible. If minimum-age limits are enforced, these girls will be unable to get an education. The issue is fading in importance as the bulge of overage students who entered when free primary education was declared gradually moves through the standards and there is much less overage enrollment in first and subsequent standards.

Pilot Programs to Test Approaches To Quality Improvement

Village-Based Schools

A Village-Based Schools project was implemented with a grant to the Save the Children Federation. The project was designed as a pilot activity to explore ways of establishing schools in rural areas and to test methods for improving the quality of schooling. The VBS project has paid particular attention to girls' education by locating schools in communities, shortening the distance pupils travel to reach school, recruiting female teachers from the communities to serve as role models for the girls, encouraging community members to send girls to school and keep them there, creating a girl-friendly curriculum, and providing gender training for all VBS teachers.

The program, however, is poorly linked with the government, the education system, and other GABLE programs. The initial lack of coordination with the government is being overcome as village-based schools are now included in the circuits of district primary education advisers, and VBS teachers are now receiving training to bring them up to the standards of government-certified teachers. Regarding linkages with other GABLE programs, VBS created its own gender-sensitive curriculum and training for its teachers rather than working with the Gender-Appropriate Curriculum unit of the GABLE program. Nor was GABLE's Social Mobilization Campaign asked to become involved in the communities when an effort was being made to encourage parents to send their daughters to school and eliminate obstacles that might lead them to drop out.

Results of this pilot program should be fully examined for possible incorporation into the education system. Two evaluations and a recent study of achievement suggest the village-based

schools may have improved both access to and quality of girls' education. An evaluation of the VBS project completed after the CDIE evaluation indicates that girls performed as well as boys in village-based schools and that achievement test scores for both girls and boys in Save the Children–assisted schools were far above those for government and religious schools. One important outstanding question is, What are the costs of replicating this program nationwide? Another is, If the model as a whole is too expensive, which components could be replicated cost-effectively by the government?

Gender Streaming

A passing grade in mathematics is a prerequisite for entry into various programs such as teacher training and technical colleges. It is also a requirement for science-based programs at the university level. In Malawi, the increasing use of mathematics as a means of selection limits girls' educational and professional opportunities.

Compared with boys, girls have performed poorly on math examinations. A 1993 study undertaken in two secondary schools that separated boys and girls in some classes found improved academic achievement for both sexes. A subsequent study was undertaken with USAID support under GABLE II. It sought to learn if similar improvements came about when boys and girls were taught math separately in primary school pilot programs. The results to date are inconclusive.

Programs to Support Implementation of Reform

Gender-Appropriate Curriculum Unit

To take advantage of the ongoing revision of the primary school curriculum, GABLE I established a Gender-Appropriate Curriculum unit at the Malawi Institute of Education. The unit was charged with 1) revising curricula to make them gender appropriate, 2) developing supplementary gender-appropriate materials for primary schools, 3) making all ongoing in-service teacher training gender appropriate, and 4) helping senior officials at the national, regional, and district levels become aware of gender issues in their policies and practices. Part of the conditionality of GABLE I was that the Ministry of Education create a plan for this unit, cover the recurrent costs of setting up and operating the unit, and hire the unit's lecturer. However, the exact status of the Gender-Appropriate Curriculum unit as a sustainable institutional entity has always been ambiguous, because it has not been clear if it was part of a USAID project, a unit of the Education Ministry, or an arm of the Institute of Education.

The curricular reforms have been written for all primary standards, including the supplementary materials for standards 1 and 2, and for all the teacher training college courses. Materials for some standards are in the schools, whereas others have been printed and are on the way to schools. Training materials have been produced for Education Ministry personnel, reference manuals have been produced for the teacher training colleges, and a gender-issues case study has been prepared for use at the teacher training colleges.

By November 1997, 235 of 560 primary education advisers and 8 district education advisers (education supervisors at the district level) had been trained in gender sensitivity. However, few—if any—of them had been able to pass their experience on to teachers. District offices lack funding and transportation to reach the teachers they are expected to train. Moreover, they have many other duties that detract from their ability to train teachers in gender matters.

12

Social Mobilization Campaign

The Social Mobilization Campaign was created to develop and implement a national campaign to change community norms and behavior about the importance of girls' primary education. It also was tasked with shaping demand for girls' schooling. The campaign used a participatory research and learning approach to work with communities. Primary education advisers and community development assistants participated, too; they were charged with sustaining the community and school changes. The Social Mobilization Campaign (SMC) did not become fully operational until 1994, but it has become a major activity of GABLE in the

Features of the Social Mobilization Campaign

Since its inception, SMC has

Empowered communities. Through its participatory research process, SMC worked with communities to identify problems that impede girls' entry and retention in primary standards. Action plans are formulated, supported, and promoted by village leaders and implemented with support from primary education advisers and community development assistants.

Responded to Malawi's reality. A weak mass media infrastructure ruled out a media-heavy social marketing campaign. Radio messages supported community mobilization, training, and policy reforms.

Established information and dissemination channels at the community level. Through participatory village meetings and focus group discussions, SMC used effective interpersonal networks for its principal channel of communication.

Empowered community development assistants. By strengthening and augmenting the community development assistant structure, SMC helped these assistants to effectively use focus group and participatory research skills and sustain involvement after SMC personnel leave a community.

Promoted development of a cadre of community researchers and the next generation of change agents. Fifty students from Chancellor College (font of Malawi's future leaders) have conducted participatory research and the theater for development in various villages throughout the country. They now constitute a cadre of community researchers and a new generation of leaders who understand what needs to be done at the village level and how to go about doing it.

Promoted attitudinal change and changes in practices among chiefs, initiation counselors, teachers, parents, and students. Work with initiation counselors in some communities resulted in advancing the age of girls at initiation (a ritual observed when girls reach puberty), changing the timing of initiation ceremonies to the end of the school year instead of interrupting the school year, and changing initiation ceremony songs to support education. Chiefs eliminated obscene language in some initiation rites. Some reports suggest that after initiation more girls go back to school and fewer become pregnant than previously.

Introduced a role-model program for primary girls. The Social Mobilization Campaign brought new models to villages through theater troops of male and female university students. The minister of education at the time free primary education was introduced was quoted as saying, "Let us not go in as Americans talking to Africans but with articulate Malawians, so that Malawians can talk to Malawians and these people can serve as role models." SMC also created a series of booklets and calendars publicizing Malawian women's achievements. The evaluation team noticed the calendars hanging in the office of every regional and district community development assistant they visited.

Introduced incentives for students, teachers, and schools. SMC used girls' sports competitions, awards rallies, and T-shirts as incentives for students, teachers, and schools. The evaluators found that incentives were highly sought after and were a source of community pride and achievement.

relatively short time since then. At the time of this evaluation SMC had

- Conducted research in 210 villages using theater-for-development methodology
- Trained the majority of the district field workers from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women, Youth, and Community Services
- Trained nearly 18,000 local leaders and nearly 12,500 school committee members and sensitized more than 11,600 teachers
- Implemented numerous village-based initiatives
- Produced and distributed 12,000 T-shirts, 30,000 calendars, 1.8 million comic books, 600,000 role-model readers, 36,000 newsletters, and 6,000 postcards
- Produced and broadcast 156 weekly radio programs

SMC appears to enjoy high visibility and credibility in Malawi and internationally as an ambitious, well-designed, well-implemented, and effective social mobilization effort. Through Action Plans (a special feature of the program) steps have been taken to improve quality in the schools—for example, building new schools and expelling unsuitable teachers. Scaling up and evaluation (both process and impact) are its current challenges.

SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

The GABLE program toted up a number of significant achievements. Among them, it

Increased government investment in primary education. Nonproject assistance funding combined with budget conditionalities has contributed to strong and continued government increases in the percent of budget directed to education (from 10 percent in 1991–92 to 23 percent in 1997–98). Funding for primary education, as a percentage of the education budget, has also increased (from 47 percent in 1994 to 59 percent in 1997). The number of spaces at the primary level has soared for both girls and boys, though to the detriment of educational quality.

Increased primary enrollments and persistence of girls. Between 1990–91 (when GABLE began) and 1995–96 (the last year for which data are available), girls' enrollments at the primary level almost doubled (from 772,000 to 1,528,000) and girls' enrollments as compared with boys' also rose, from 45 percent to 47 percent, as an overall percentage of enrollments. GABLE support and policy emphasis on girls' education contributed significantly to the progressively higher proportion of girls who enter and persist through the primary education system. Of particular significance—in a country where girls often leave school before completing the primary standards—is that girls' enrollments as a proportion of standard 8 enrollments has steadily increased since 1991 when GABLE began (from 36 percent in 1990–91 to 39 percent in 1995–96) and and that fee waivers were offered to nonrepeating girls from standard 2 onward.

Made girls' education visible on the national agenda. Without a doubt, GABLE has helped make girls' education a visible element on the national agenda. Everyone in Malawi that the evaluators interviewed—from highest level government officials to parents and children in communities—had heard of GABLE and knew it had something to do with girls' education. At the village level GABLE is mostly identified with the Social Mobilization Campaign, which emphasizes changing norms and practices to keep girls in primary school. The Secondary Girls' Scholarship Program, introduced under GABLE II, is also widely known. One of the strongest supporters of girls' education is the current president.

Achieved buy-in and ownership through the Social Mobilization Campaign. Extensive interviewing of diverse stakeholders suggests that SMC succeeded at working in and with communities to transform attitudes and practices about girls' education. Its strengths reflect the knowledge built in recent years about how ideas are introduced, how social norms evolve, and how behaviors change. The strengths also show the importance of the media, of policy reform, of social marketing, and of continuing community work.

Helped energize the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Culture. Today, staff at all levels of this ministry are committed supporters of the SMC Program. All indications are that SMC—operating in the way it has at the community level—has been very effective at building ownership among parents, children, religious leaders, initiation leaders, and chiefs.

Resulted in positive attitudes about girls' education. Although no hard data exist, the evaluators were told over and over by people they interviewed at all levels of society that SMC was having a clear and positive impact on the attitudes of girls, their parents, and community leaders about girls' education and particularly the importance of sending girls to school.

GABLE's Multiple Approaches to Gender-Differentiated Education Issues

Multiple, simultaneous approaches address barriers to girls' participation:

Policy reforms

- They reduced costs, which are obstacles to girls' school participation, through primary school fee waivers, secondary school scholarships, and elimination of uniforms.
- They minimized constraints on girls' persistence by enacting policies to reduce repetition, and eliminate expulsion for pregnancy.

Leadership and institutional changes

- The Gender-Appropriate Curriculum unit has improved the primary school curriculum and attitudes and practices of staff at the Malawi Institute of Education; it also is beginning to change the training provided by teacher colleges and by primary education advisers.
- The Social Mobilization Campaign's participatory involvement of university students, community leaders, community members, community development advisers, staff from the Ministry of Education, and community workers from the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Culture has formed a new cohort of leaders with experience of the reality of life in rural communities.

Promoting involvement and ownership of key stakeholders

- GABLE I was grounded in and promoted the activities of the National Commission on Women and other Malawian groups with political and institutional power.
- GABLE equity concerns were validated by a newly elected government.
- Participatory methodologies empowered local leaders and communities and corresponded with the democratization process.
- The Gender-Appropriate Curriculum unit's gender-sensitive primary school curriculum corresponded with an ongoing curriculum reform process.
- The unit's gender-training materials were prepared for use in new teacher training programs.

Research and pilot activities address gender

- GABLE technical assistance has produced a richer background of gender-centered research than is found in most sub-Saharan countries, but some of this research has not been translated into programs.
- GABLE supported pilot projects such as Village-Based Schools and Gender Streaming for Math.

Introduced multiple interventions to reduce gender differentials. GABLE supported research on gender differences in barriers and opportunities for primary school children in Malawi. It supported features of policy reform and program design (e.g., emphasizing recruitment of new female teachers) that will have particularly strong effects on girls. And, finally, it has supported programs such as the Gender-Appropriate Curriculum unit to specifically target gender issues. The multiplicity of approaches is suitable to the multiplicity of gender differentials.

The CDIE evaluation team also noted several shortcomings:

Policy not implemented. The repetition policy that was supposed to have an indirect effect on girls met with a great deal of resistance. The repetition policy was difficult to implement and monitor. Steps were not taken to address the key underlying constraints that manifest themselves in high levels of repetition. Teachers did not understand its purpose, and they were not trained in new approaches to ensure that more students achieved to a higher standard and deserved to be promoted. The system could not effectively track students and thus could not monitor implementation or its consequences.

Weak links among program elements. GABLE missed some opportunities to forge stronger bonds among various elements both internally and with government agencies. For example:

- The Gender-Appropriate Curriculum unit has been integrated into the Malawian Institute of Education, but its position and role in the overall education system is poorly defined. That leads to marginalization and questionable sustainability.

- The Village-Based Schools pilot activity was not linked to the Ministry of Education and the education system's district-level support systems. This may curtail its sustainability and reduce its effect on community schools and on gender.

- The Social Mobilization Campaign is not linked to the Ministry of Education. This is a missed opportunity for the ministry. For example, the campaign does not receive information from the ministry on new policies and is not part of strategic dissemination. The campaign is not given the opportunity to feed back to the ministry what it has learned about the implementation of policies and effectiveness of programs.

- Original relationships with Malawian political groups supporting girls' education have not been sustained. Women's strength is increasing with democracy. The groups' active policy involvement in girls' education should be sought.

Lack of an operational performance monitoring and evaluation system. For a program that has obligated more than $30 million, lack of an operational performance monitoring and evaluation system is a serious vulnerability. Attempts to install and operate a single comprehensive education management information system have faltered, although a promising start has been made with the successful collection and reporting of statistical data for the 1997 school year. There is no regular tracking of the effects of GABLE programs and policy reforms at the community and classroom level, making it impossible to assess their effects or base remediaton on factual problem diagnosis.

Little evidence of improved quality. Where the Social Mobilization Campaign and Village-Based Schools programs operated, program implementers took steps to improve schools. For example, communities became involved in schools, female teachers were recruited, interactive learning methodologies were tried, and

sanctions were imposed against male teachers who abused girls. Despite these efforts and attempts to improve curricula and train new teachers (not a USAID activity), it appears that overall the quality of education for girls and boys declined during GABLE. The introduction of free primary education flooded the Malawian school system with students, with serious consequences:

- Eighteen thousand out of the 22,000 new teachers brought on board are not qualified and are still being trained.
- Class sizes remain unevenly distributed. Teachers in the early standards tend to have very large classes, some in the hundreds, while teachers in the upper standards often have very small classes.
- There is a shortage of 38,000 primary classrooms; teachers are providing classes under trees or in overcrowded buildings.
- Primary education advisers are not prepared to serve the tremendous influx of new and untrained teachers in a training and support capacity.
- Systems are not functioning reliably to distribute and deliver primary textbooks and learning materials to schools on time.

Added stress to the education system from the Girls' Secondary Scholarship Program. GABLE is now seen by some as a program that supports free secondary girls' education. It's a service Malawi cannot afford. Potentially adverse consequences of the Secondary Girls' Scholarship Program include the following:

- The program may stimulate rapid expansion of secondary education. This will be accelerated if political pressure leads to a policy of free universal secondary education for all. The government cannot keep up with expanding primary enrollments and certainly cannot afford secondary expansion.
- If not administered rigorously, the program could undermine cost recovery at the secondary level, where many students come from families of means.
- Difficulties in administering the program may present opportunities for corruption. And delays in distribution of scholarship funds have resulted in some poorer girls—those the program was designed to benefit—having to leave school.

The Social Mobilization Campaign: questions of linkages, replicability, sustainability. Notwithstanding the positive assessment of the SMC, there are a number of areas where improvements are needed or where caution is recommended. No matter how effective a social mobilization campaign is at changing parental and community attitudes, it has to be supported by improvements in the schooling being offered—and this has not happened in Malawi. The weak linkage between SMC and the Ministry of Education has meant that school quality and availability has not been carefully calibrated with community demand for education. Or, in social marketing terms, the product (primary schooling) has been successfully promoted before it has been successfully produced; demand for a quality product exceeds supply.

A second concern involves the future of SMC and other programs that attempt to copy its methods. The complex participatory approaches used to date by SMC have led to communities playing active roles in creating change. In order to save money or abbreviate the process, shortcuts may be tried that do not involve the sociocultural unit of the community in discovering problems and developing solutions. Some effective approaches, such as

working with groups of initiation counselors, have already been cut back.

Finally, the sustainability of the Social Mobilization Campaign has not been well planned. Given its effectiveness, it is a remarkable resource for communities and the Ministry of Education beyond just girls' education. Outside of working with community development advisers and primary education advisers, there appear to have been no serious efforts to institutionalize it either within the ministry, under an existing nongovernmental organization, or by building a new organization around it. Careful monitoring of outcomes and analysis of costs has not been done and would lay a foundation for strategic planning to continue SMC activities. Local staff do not hold the most visible leadership positions in SMC (the director is American, and the deputy position has been left unfilled)—another missed opportunity for strengthening local ownership and sustaining SMC outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

Access, Quality, and Equity

Policy and program initiatives in Malawi demonstrate that removing economic and other impediments to girls' education rapidly increases girls' participation. The lack of monitoring data precludes careful analysis of the effectiveness of specific policies and programs or of synergies among them. This is a significant loss; in effect, it eliminates the possibility of data-based strategic planning.

Nevertheless, indications are that girls'—and boys'—school participation has accelerated rapidly. The downside is that quality of schooling has declined, because of overcrowded classes (especially in the early standards), inexperienced and untrained teachers, and erratic provision of instructional materials.

Sustainability

Although several GABLE I interventions were appropriate for the social and historical context, and at the time augured well for sustainability, Malawian ownership for key GABLE II program interventions has not been maximized. Policies have been sustained and expanded in two instances (fee waivers and scholarships) and rejected in others (repetition and age limits). USAID's emphasis under GABLE II was on conditionalities rather than on analysis of the investment framework, a process of flexible dialog, and constructive engagement on the pros and cons of policy reforms.

USAID'S Comparative Advantage

In Malawi, USAID is considered a leader in girls' education. It has supported innovative approaches to policies and programs that integrate girls and it has catalyzed investments by other donors. Everyone, including other donors, speaks highly of the Social Mobilization Campaign and specifically what it has done to promote access for girls and change attitudes toward girls' education. A number of other donors are integrating gender into their programs, some owing to GABLE's influence, some for reasons entirely independent of GABLE.

In addition, the introduction of a combination of project and nonproject assistance under GABLE in 1991 was clearly useful in reinforcing the objectives of the project. Although this combination worked (and to the favor of girls) under GABLE I, the use of nonproject assistance has run into difficulties under GABLE II. That is in large part due to national political changes outside the countrol of USAID and the Ministry of Education. The Agency's strength has been the caliber of its technical guidance and its presence in situ.

18

LESSONS LEARNED

The vision and goal of an educated citizenry is integral to Malawi's evolving democracy. How to achieve that goal of universal education is a daunting challenge. Access must increase—and it has, successfully and rapidly. But quality must be sustained or improved, and this has not happened. Moreover, sustainable financing must be planned; this has not occurred, either. From the overall GABLE experience, the following lessons emerge:

1. Engage in effective policy dialog. Policy dialog during design and implementation is key to the success of an education program with a major nonproject assistance component. In Malawi, effective dialog was challenged by significant changes in the national context, turnover in USAID direct-hire staff, and the scarcity of education sector specialists in USAID/Malawi.

The announcement of free primary education created uncertainty about sector financing and planning. For the USAID Mission, which was striving in GABLE II to improve quality and efficiency of primary education, this announcement might have been a warning signal. In hindsight, the Mission could have improved the probability of GABLE II's success by entering into a policy dialog with government leadership and a broader set of stakeholders to reach agreement on a coordinated, country-led investment strategy that factored in the implications of free primary education on quality and efficiency of schooling.

Although nonproject assistance seemed to work effectively under GABLE I, GABLE II, with 82 percent nonproject assistance, came into being without an overall sector strategy in place that might have framed dialog between USAID and the Malawian government, as well as donor coordination. The Education Ministry's relationship to GABLE II has been reactive rather than proactive, and there is little country ownership of the overall GABLE program. Since implementation of GABLE II began, tension has existed between GABLE's emphasis on increasing quality and efficiency, on the one hand, and, on the other, the ministry's need to attend to the dramatic opening in access occasioned by the presidential policy of free primary education.

2. Build on local initiative. The initial GABLE program was built on an initiative of a group of Malawian women working through the National Council of Women and in the Ministry of Education. GABLE would not be where it is today with regard to gender had USAID not built on this existing base.

Local ownership of problems and solutions is powerful. Through its participatory research process the Social Mobilization Campaign has helped communities identify problems that impede girls' entry into and retention in primary standards. Communities formulated action plans; these plans were supported and promoted by village leaders and then implemented by the community. Attitude and behavior change proceeded almost simultaneously because the target audiences "owned" the problems and the solutions.

3. Identify and work with change agents. The Social Mobilization Campaign has adapted to and taken advantage of local conditions. It uses Chancellor College students (Malawi's future leaders); community development advisers from the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Culture; and primary education advisers from the Ministry of Education to identify and work through village chiefs and local leaders, initiation leaders, and religious leaders. The Theater for Development Program, for which SMC is widely known, has permitted SMC—on a community-by-community basis—to address immediate problems in the communities.

4. Work with leaders at all levels. Leadership at the local level is essential for increasing girls' schooling and was enlisted in the Social Mobilization and Village-Based Schools initiatives. Nationally, technical and political leadership is also important to provide a framework and direction for change. Where USAID *collaborated* with local leaders, implementation of controversial policies was more effective than where policies were perceived as impositions. The Mission successfully supported technical staff in the Gender-Appropriate Curriculum unit to initiate the pregnancy policy. Today, although the pregnancy policy is still controversial with teachers, it appears to have broad support and is being carried out. By contrast, the policy of reducing repetition, a condition for disbursement of nonproject assistance funds, did not mobilize teachers and schools. It is still resisted.

Local political changes and presidential leadership were essential to the rapid increase in girls' school participation, because they gave voice and vision to the girls' access initiative and provided a framework and blueprint for action at the community level.

5. Reach beyond the Education Ministry to address gender issues. The Social Mobilization Campaign is channeled through the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Culture. There is stronger ownership in this ministry for SMC than in the Ministry of Education, which is not accustomed to such initiatives and is overextended with other programs and responsibilities. However, linkages to the ministry should be developed. Politically, the identification of SMC with the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Culture is also important. The National Commission on Women, which gave the impetus for many of the gender-related actions under GABLE I, is now disbanded, but key actors in the commission are still actively supporting the girls' education cause in Malawi. A challenge for USAID/Malawi is to reincorporate these key actors into the program design process as they were in the design for GABLE I.

6. Watch context and timing. One of the reasons GABLE got off to such a good start was that it was grounded in the activities of the National Commission on Women and other Malawian groups and carried out at a time when there was growing international interest in the impact of girls' education. In addition, increasing girls' participation in education and the use of participatory methodologies that empower local leaders and communities corresponded with the democratization process that began before 1994. Creation of a gender-sensitive primary school curriculum through the Gender-Appropriate Curriculum unit was also timed to correspond with an ongoing curriculum reform process.

7. Analyze potential adverse consequences of new interventions. USAID directed a minimum of $2 million per year of nonproject assistance funding for scholarships for needy nonrepeating secondary girls to encourage them to complete primary school and continue into secondary. As did primary education fee waivers, secondary education scholarships have become part of the political debate; the president went far beyond the education system's current capacity by announcing that all secondary girls would receive scholarships (this was later trimmed back to all *nonrepeating* secondary girls). In Malawi's politically charged environment, the Secondary Girls' Scholarship Program may fuel a demand for free secondary education for all. The government simply cannot afford such a policy, and USAID, presumably, did not intend it in its own programming.

8. Make midcourse adjustments when the context changes. Significant changes in the political, cultural, and economic context occurred after GABLE II was initiated: multiparty democracy began in 1994; relative economic stability was replaced with soaring inflation, which led to a restrictive cash budgeting system. This impeded the ability of government

ministries to effectively use nonproject assistance. Cash budgeting controls led to administrative and logistic disruptions in the Ministry of Education. Yet few changes were made in the design or implementation of the GABLE II program. This has created frustration among the Ministry of Education, USAID, and technical assistance personnel.

9. Communicate and integrate. GABLE's most visible successes and serious drawbacks are based on communication. The Social Mobilization Campaign succeeded in supporting communication about girls' education within communities and among local leaders as well as among communities, GABLE staff, primary education advisers, and community development advisers. But GABLE did not communicate as well as it could have to link its several initiatives, integrate its work with the Ministry of Education, and coordinate policy initiatives and program support with other donors. All this has undermined sustainability of policies, programs, and outcomes.

10. Recognize the importance of change agents and leadership. The strength of the Social Mobilization Campaign was that it was designed to take into consideration realities in Malawi (such as the fact that there is no effective mass media infrastructure that can be used to carry out a traditional social marketing campaign) and that it built into the design an appreciation of the importance of working through existing organizational structures at the community level. SMC staff—using Chancellor College students, primary education advisers from the Ministry of Education, and community development advisers with the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Culture—have searched out and worked through, as the situation has warranted, village chiefs and local leaders, initiation leaders, and religious leaders.

Leadership at the local level has been essential and has been strengthened or complemented by leadership at other levels of the system. National leadership has helped provide a framework and blueprint for action. In Malawi political change pushed national leadership out ahead of donors in the haste to increase access to basic education. Although real downsides exist for economic sustainability and quality of schooling, national leadership captured, communicated, and boosted the nation's vision of girls' and boys' needs for education. This was key to widespread transformation of social norms, expectations, and behaviors.

To order paper copies of this report, PN–ACA–916, please contact USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse, 1611 N. Kent Street, Arlington, VA 22209. Or you can phone (703) 351–4006, or fax (703) 351–4039, or e-mail: docorder@dec.cdie.org.

To access from the intranet, the address is www.usaid.gov. Look under CDIE Online, then under CDIE Newsletters, Short Reports, and Bibliographies, or in the economic growth sector.